

Legislative Testimony
Human Services Committee
HB 5355 AAC An Advanced Dental Hygiene Practice Pilot Program
Tuesday, March 2, 2010
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My name is Dr. Kurt Koral. I have been oral and maxillofacial surgeon in private practice for 30 and have been employed in the public sector for the last eight years. I have served as acting Chief and Chief and Dentistry at Yale New Haven Hospital, overseeing 18 residents in a general practice residency program and a pediatric residency program. Yale New Haven Hospital is the safety net for a very significant number of Medicaid recipients in the state of Connecticut.

The bill to create a mid-level Dental Hygiene practitioner states that individuals receiving this training would limit their practice to the public sector. If the assumption is that treating the patient population in the public sector is less complicated than treating the general population, the reverse is true. Medicaid patients often present with chronic degenerative diseases. Some of these patients require kidney and liver transplants, patients suffering from sickle cell anemia, and immune suppression. These patients need treatment by highly trained dentists with advanced skills and hospital training and experience.

The average pay, including benefits, of dental hygienists at Yale New Haven Hospital is approximately \$85,000 a year. A mid-level practitioner will be paid a significantly higher salary. Dental residents are paid approximately \$49,000 a year at Yale New Haven Hospital and their salary is fully reimbursed by Medicare. Thus using the mid-level dental hygiene practitioner at Yale New Haven hospital would not be cost effective and would make access even more difficult.

Finally, it is certainly appropriate for a group of practitioners to want to change or expand their scope of practice but we should not delude ourselves in thinking that the creation of a mid-level dental hygiene practitioner will improve access to care.

Respectfully Submitted,

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